

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
INRE-00 DHA-05 L-03 SS-15 SP-02 TRSE-00 IO-13
NSCE-00 NSC-05 /065 W
-----074591 030134Z /75

O 030120Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6492
INFO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY QUITO

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 7635

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP
SUBJECT: PERUVIAN BILATERAL: THE ARMS BUILDUP AND
SUB-REGIONAL STABILITY

REF: SANTIAGO 7220

1. PRESIDENT MORALES BERMUDEZ WILL EXPECT TO HEAR
CONCERN AND DISAPPROVAL WITH RESPECT TO THE PERUVIAN
ARMS BUILDUP. HE KNOWS OUR VIEWS -- AND HE KNOWS THAT
THE ISSUE IS CRITICAL IN TERMS OF HIS HOPES FOR US
SUPPORT IN THE COUNTRY'S CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS.
I DO RECOMMEND, HOWEVER, THAT THIS SUBJECT BE ADDRESSED
IN THE CONTEXT OF RECENT PERUVIAN STATEMENTS HERE AND
IN WASHINGTON TO THE EFFECT THAT MILITARY EXPENDITURES
WILL BE LIMITED TO OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE DURING
THE NEXT THREE YEARS.

2. IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT WE HAVE BEEN PRETTY MUCH
ALONE SINCE 1974 IN EXPRESSING CONCERN TO THE PERUVIANS ABOUT THEIR
BUILDUP. THIS COUNTRY'S NEIGHBORS HAVE GIVEN US
AN ALMOST CONSTANT EARFUL BUT SEEM TO REGARD THE
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SUBJECT AS TOO DELICATE TO THREAT DIRECTLY WITH THEIR
POTENTIAL ADVERSARY. IF THE MEETING WITH MORALES
BERMUDEZ COMES OFF NEXT WEEK, PINOCHET WILL HAVE THE
PERFECT OPPORTUNITY TO ASK SOME HARD QUESTIONS ABOUT
ALL THOSE TANKS AND PLANES. THE ANSWERS ARE NOT LIKELY
TO BE VERY SATISFACTORY BUT PERHAPS A LITTLE FRANK TALK
AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL CAN HELP MOVE THE CHILEAN-PERUVIAN

DIALOGUE ALONG TO A MORE PRODUCTIVE STAGE.

3. FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A NUMBER OF YEARS OF FOLLOWING THIS ISSUE, I FIND MYSELF UNABLE TO AGREE THAT "A PERUVIAN INVASION OF CHILE IS A GROWING POSSIBILITY" (PARA 5, REFTEL). IF THE PERUVIAN MILITARY DECIDED IN THE FIRST PLACE TO BUILD UP THEIR FORCES IN ORDER TO INVADE CHILE IN 1979 OR WHENEVER - WHICH I DOUBT - THE ODDS REMAIN THE SAME. IF THERE IS NO FIXED PLAN, THE POSSIBILITY OF PERUVIAN AGGRESSION SEEMS TO ME MATERIALLY REDUCED. THIS IS A FAR MORE RATIONAL REGIME THAN VELASCO'S. THE MILITARY GROUP CURRENTLY IN POWER HERE STRIKES ME AS SIGNIFICANTLY MORE MODERATE AND REALISTIC THAN THE LIKES OF RODRIGUEZ FIGUERO AND GRAHAM. IF THEY CAN MAKE IT UP WITH APRA, WHY NOT WITH CHILE?

4. IT APPEARS MORE LIKELY TO ME THAT CONFLICT WOULD COME IN THIS REGION AS THE RESULT OF INCREASING TENSIONS AND MISINFORMATION. THE ENGERAL ATMOSPHERE IS IMPORTANT IN THAT REGARD. I BELIEVE WE SHOULD DO WHAT WE CAN TO PROMOTE CALM AND FRIENDLY ATTITUDES -A AT LEAST AS LONG AS WE LACK BETTER EVIDENCE THAN WE HAVE OF AGGRESSIVE PERUVIAN INTENTIONS. IT IS FOR THAT REASON THAT I WOULD RECOMMEND AGAINST THE KIND OF DRAMATIC FORMULATION SUGGESTED IN THE SECOND TALKING CONFIDENTIAL

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POINT OF REFTEL'S PARA 10. I WOULD FAVOR A MORE POSITIVE APPROACH AT THIS TIME, STRESSING OUR REPEATED PUBLIC COMMITMENTS OF ALL THE COUNTRIES CONCERNED TO THE PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES AND OUR OWN DISPOSITION TO BE HELPFUL IN THAT RESPECT.

5. THE PRESIDENT MIGHT MUSEFULLY EXPRESS OUR INTEREST IN PROGRES ON THE BOLIVIAN OUTLET PROBLEM. BUT, AGAIN, I THINK SOME CAUTION IS CALLED FOR IN ADDRESSING THIS ISSUE. I AM PERSUADED THAT THE PERUVIANS HAVE NO INTENTION OF AGREEING TO A CORRIDOR -- UNLESS IT WERE TO GO THROUGH ANTOFAGASTA. IT WILL TAKE VERY HEAVY PRESSURE INDEED TO MOVE THEM. I WOULD BE RELUCTANT TO PRESS TOO HARD UNTIL THERE IS A SOLID PROPOSAL ON THE TABLE CLEARLY ACCEPTABLE TO THE BOLIVIANS AND CHILEANS AND SUPPORTED BY OTHER LATIN AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS, PARTICULARLY VENEZUELA'S. OTHERWISE WE RISK ADDING TO THE TENSIONS IN THE AREA -- AND THE PERUVIANS DO GET TENSE ABOUT THE CORRIDOR -- WITHOUT MUCH PROMISE OF GAIN.
SHLAUDEMAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, BRIEFING MATERIALS, MILITARY POLICIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 03-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977LIMA07635
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770319-0556
Format: TEL
From: LIMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197708102/aaaadiqo.tel
Line Count: 115
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 8d8a144f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 SANTIAGO 7220
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29-Dec-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1406546
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PERUVIAN BILATERAL: THE ARMS BUILDUP AND -REGIONAL STABILITY
TAGS: PDIP, MPOL, US, PE, (CARTER, JIMMY), (MORALES BERMUDEZ CERRUTTI, FRANCISC)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/8d8a144f-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009